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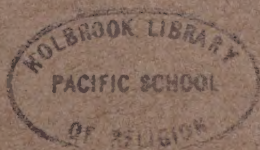


Michaelis

"There is no Religion higher than Truth."



TRUE OCCULTISM.



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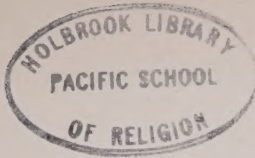
THE THEOSOPHICAL SOCIETY.

THE principal aim and object of this Society is to form the nucleus of a Universal Brotherhood of Humanity, without distinction of race, creed, sex, caste or colour. The subsidiary objects are: the study of ancient and modern religions, philosophies and sciences, and the demonstration of the importance of such study; and the investigation of the unexplained laws of nature and the psychical powers latent in man.

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TRUE OCCULTISM.

THROUGHOUT all the ages, since man as man has inhabited this earth, no subject has ever proved of such absorbing interest to, or been more thoroughly misunderstood by the bulk of mankind than Occultism. Far off, in the earliest records of our race, long before the dawn of civilization, we see humanity groping eagerly for light, striving to learn the hidden secrets of nature, to pierce the veil which hangs between our material world and the invisible. We see, too, that men have always realized that a knowledge of these secrets would confer on them greater powers than those possessed by the race as a whole, and they have invariably revered, or feared, those of their fellow-men who had discovered more than themselves and had therefore gained powers which appeared to them to be magical.

It is this magical side of Occultism which has always made such an irresistible appeal to mankind, an appeal unfortunately made more often to what is lowest than to what is highest in human nature. For if all men desire to gain certain

magical powers, powers which will, they think, make them as gods, it is not invariably or indeed often, that they desire them from the very highest motives, or indeed from any other motive than ambition, greed for material advantages, or lust of power.

In the great history of magic, as it has come down to us through countless ages, nothing strikes one more forcibly than the extreme gullibility of mankind, their eagerness to run after any one who promised to procure for them some futile, material advantage by violating, or appearing to violate, some one or other of the laws of Nature. The real Occultist, whose teachings are of the spirit only, finds but few disciples, while any charlatan promising to turn lead into gold, or distil the water of youth, which can convert old men into young ones and cure all human ills, is always sure of a following.

Nor is this true only of the superstitious and credulous days of the Middle Ages ; human nature changes little with the passing of the years, and the man of the Twentieth Century is the same, in all essentials, as his forefather of the Stone Age. Indeed it would seem as if this craving to possess powers so called magical had never been stronger

than in the present day. It is almost impossible to pick up a newspaper, magazine or book, without finding in it something having reference, more or less directly, to Occultism or the Occult Arts, and this appeal which is made to us so continually that sooner or later it is bound to force an entrance into our minds, is seldom one to our higher nature, and when it is not mere trickery is often Black Magic, either conscious or unconscious.

It is therefore a matter of the most vital importance that we should learn to know what true Occultism really is, and when we begin our study of it we should be quite sure that it *is* Occultism we are studying and not merely the Occult Arts, should be certain that our feet are set on the narrow path that will eventually lead us to White Magic, and not on that broader, easier one, leading directly to Black Magic and all its direful consequences. In this, as in all essential matters, a wise discrimination is necessary ; it is, as always, a question of the hair line, dividing what is wise and lawful from what is unwise and unlawful. But we cannot complain that we have been left to find the way alone, without guidance or instruction. Every age, every century, has given birth to real masters, to genuine Initiates, sent to remind men

of the eternal truths they are so apt to forget, and in the many writings and teachings they have bequeathed to us, we can all, if we will, discover the meaning of true Occultism. Egyptian Initiates, Hindu sages, Greek philosophers, Christian mystics, all have brought us an imperishable message, all have shown us some one facet of that Truth which is so many sided and yet eternally the same. Surely in all this wealth of teaching that is spread out before us, there is not one of us but can find some fragment of knowledge that seems to have been written solely for our own benefit, some one single truth that finds an instant echo in our own heart. True it may be, that much of this knowledge handed down to us may at first sight appear confused and difficult to understand, but no truth would be occult at all if it could be made easy of comprehension to the whole world, and the sacred mysteries have always been most carefully hidden from the gaze of curious and indifferent eyes. No one expects to pick up precious stones as we do pebbles, on a beaten highway; only deep under the earth are they to be found, hidden away in the rocks, where they have slept undisturbed for numberless centuries, and it requires much patience and hard work to extricate them. So, too, it

requires patient and loving labour to discover the truths of Occultism under the words that seem more often designed to hide than to reveal them.

In our days, however, the veil has been lifted to a greater extent than it has ever been before, and learning has been made easier for us than it was for our forefathers, so that we can blame no one but ourselves if we follow a dangerous will-o'-the-wisp, instead of the pure light of a guiding star. In an article by H. P. B., "Occultism *versus* the Occult Arts," which appeared in *Lucifer*, the difference between true and false Occultism is luminously and unmistakably shown, and further details are to be found in many other articles and writings of hers on this subject. Three paragraphs from one of these articles strike one as being particularly forcible and enlightening. They read as follows:—

"Occultism is *not* Magic, though Magic is one of its tools."

"Occultism is *not* the acquirement of powers whether psychic or intellectual, though both are its servants. Neither is Occultism the pursuit of happiness, as men understand the word, for the first step is sacrifice, the second renunciation."

"Occultism is the Science of Life, the Art of Living!"

Here in the first two paragraphs, we are told clearly what Occultism is *not*, and in the third equally clearly what it *is*.

Occultism therefore is certainly not Magic, for Magic is only one of its tools—a tool that might prove of great value in wise and capable hands, but full of danger both to the user and to others, if the hands which hold it are either inexperienced or unscrupulous. Herein lies the evil of most of the so-called Occultism of the twentieth century, which is nothing but Magic, and which, being either ignorantly used, or designed purposely to make an appeal to the lower and more material side of our nature, is a source of great danger to all who may be brought within the circle of its influence.

Neither, we are told, does Occultism mean the acquirement of psychic or intellectual powers, though both are its servants. Does this mean that we are not to use our intellect and to ignore the psychic side of our development altogether? Not at all, but only that we should use them wisely and make them, in all things, the servants of our Higher Self, and not its master. A severe mental training is of the greatest importance to all students of Occultism, for it is not our business to accept any

teaching blindly, but on the contrary to examine it searchingly, by the light of the intellect, and so to discover what particular message it holds for us individually. Nothing is more interesting or instructive than to observe by what different roads men will travel to the same point, how to varying minds the same truth will appear under different aspects ; and this fact should teach us to exercise in all things the very widest tolerance, the broadest charity, and ought to prove to us that what to ourself seems truth, absolute and irrefutable, may for our brother not be the truth at all. But intellectual powers, no matter how great, must always remain sterile unless the Spirit gives them life and light, and although study and the constant exercise of the mind may lead us to the very entrance of the path, they will not take us over the threshold, unless they find an echo in our heart. In Occultism it is only soul wisdom that counts, not head learning, and great truths have often been hidden from wise men, only to be revealed to babes.

The same holds good of psychic powers that can be either the best of servants or the worst of masters, and, by the very fascination they exercise over us, so often prove dangerous. With them the

task of discrimination becomes still more difficult, for they can assume every imaginable aspect and may even make us believe that the voice of our selfish desires and passions is a direct inspiration of the soul, the gentle whisperings of our Higher Self. In the "Voice of the Silence" we are told that having learnt our own ignorance we should flee from the Hall of Learning (the psychic world of supersensual perceptions and deceptive sights), for it is dangerous in its perfidious beauty and is needed only for our probation. We are bidden to beware, lest dazzled by its illusive radiance the soul should linger and be caught in its deceptive light. Only the man in whom the power of the passions is dead altogether, who has conquered the personal self and become passion proof and well-nigh more than man, only such a one can wield psychic powers safely and use them solely for the good of others, and such men are few and hard to find. Fortunate indeed are those to whom psychic experiences come only when they have reached this high estate, who can, as it were, approach them from above, and for whom they are therefore free from danger.

If therefore true Occultism is neither magic, nor the acquirement of powers either psychic or intel-

lectual, what is it? The answer comes to us clear and unmistakable, it is the Science of Life, the Art of Living, and nothing surely can be more entirely satisfying. Ninety-nine out of a hundred people, if asked what they desired most ardently, would answer "to be happy," and indeed happiness, in some form or other, is what we all desire; but not many of us realize, perhaps, that our happiness is entirely dependent on our own will, that it is an art which must be learnt and that only when we have learnt the greater art of living, have thoroughly mastered the Science of life, can we know how to be really happy. If therefore Occultism itself is this Science, nothing can well be of more vital importance to every human being, and the study of it should be the one absorbing interest of our life.

It may be said, perhaps, that all cannot become Occultists, and this, in a sense, is true, for it takes centuries of study and self-sacrificing labour to make a real Occultist. Most of us have probably to pass through many incarnations before we can hope to reach that splendid goal, but there is no man who cannot become a genuine student of Occultism, if he so wills it. The path is open to all, and if it is true that no one can constrain us to

seek for it, equally true is it that no man, no circumstances, can prevent us from finding it, if we earnestly desire to do so. Here, in our daily lives and surroundings, no matter how unpropitious they may seem, we may find all that is necessary for the study of Occultism—for true Occultism is really an attitude of mind, a change of heart, and no amount of book learning can teach us much about it.

The first step towards it, we are told, is sacrifice; the second, renunciation. At first sight this may seem a hard saying and not encouraging, but in reality it is not so, for we are only asked to sacrifice the shadow in order that we may grasp the substance, to renounce a handful of dross in order to gain imperishable and countless treasures, that can never be taken from us. We have to live the life in order to gain the knowledge, and this knowledge is of such transcendent worth that surely no price we can have to pay for it, will seem too great. Power, too, will be ours, the greatest of all, the power to do good to others—at first, perhaps, as one of the modest, unknown benefactors of humanity, and later, as we grow stronger and wiser, in ways we cannot now even dimly imagine. It is impossible for any man or woman who thinks at all, to live long in the world and not be filled

with sorrow and sympathy at the sight of the terrible suffering and wretchedness that meet the eye on every side—suffering all the more awful because so much is borne in ignorance, or with a fierce revolt against the burden, which, to our eyes, makes it seem as if it could serve no useful purpose at all. Our hearts grow hot within us at what we must see, we long to help, we do help, and then, at a given moment, it seems as if despair would overwhelm us, for we realize that work as we will we can make no appreciable impression on the awful weight of misery beneath which humanity groans, and we feel that only the power of a god could move that burden, even a hair's breadth. And all the while that power is there, for us to take and make our own. For Occultism is Service—and one of its first and greatest lessons is to show us how we can truly serve our fellow-men. But in order to help we must first help ourselves, in order to teach we must first gain knowledge, and this we can only find within ourselves.

In the silence and quiet of our own heart we must learn to know ourselves, not as we would like to think ourselves, but as we really are, and there face to face with our faults, our follies and weaknesses we must resolve, once and for all, to conquer



them, to rise definitely above our lower self and answer resolutely to the call of our higher self that would lead us on to great and ever greater heights of endeavour and achievement. We must bury deep down out of sight all thought of self, all ambition and vanity, every feeling of separateness, until at last we lose consciousness of self altogether, and realize only that we are one with the Soul, therefore one with all other souls, no matter what outer garb they may wear, or how strange this outer semblance may appear to us. It is not easy to live such a life as this, and no spasmodic efforts will avail us anything, only a steady, persistent effort, continued unremittingly day after day, year after year, will be of any use. The days, the years will pass and it will seem as if they had brought nothing but failure and discouragement to us, the distant mountain peaks, glittering so serenely in the sunshine, will seem to be no nearer than when we first started journeying towards them. Yet, though it may appear that only failure follows on our efforts, the reality is otherwise. Discouragement, depression, belong only to the dark hours, which none can hope to escape altogether, but in those other hours, when we draw near to the great realities, our vision clears and we behold the truth.

We see that although the path is narrow and steep, fragrant blossoms of faith and hope and love bloom all along its edge ; our eyes, fixed on those glorious mountain tops, scarcely take notice of the barren stretches we must pass through, and absorbed only in helping others over difficulties, we do not feel the sharp stones that bruise and cut our feet. Our minds, cleansed and purified, become capable of grasping Eternal Wisdom, stainless Truth, and, having cast out of our lives the sordid material possessions, to which our foolish lower nature would cling, we become the possessors of noble, beautiful, and utterly satisfying things. The constant effort to attain some high ideal carries with it a glorious exhilaration, and at times the little song each man treasures in his heart swells to a flood of glowing melody. Not with reluctant, lagging feet should this path be trodden, but joyfully, swiftly, with faith and courage, certain that though the goal may be far off and still invisible, its glories transcend all human imaginings, that though obstacles may be heaped up all along the way, naught can hinder us from reaching it. Sorrow may come, but it will have lost its worst sting for us ; losses will surely be ours, but our gains will more than compensate for them ; and long

though our night may seem, we *know* that when we awake we shall indeed "be satisfied."

This then is true Occultism, the real Science of Life—this life of self-sacrifice, devotion and obedience—obedience to the Master and to our Higher Self, of loving service for others, of complete harmony with all that lives and breathes. And having mastered it, is this our goal? Far from it, for it is only the rudiments we have mastered, not the whole Science. But after seed time comes the harvest, on dawn follows the break of a glorious day, and having worked diligently in the lowest class, some day the Master will send for us to come to a higher one, where we shall see Him face to face and receive our further instructions from His own lips. Then, pausing for an instant on our age-long journey, we shall look around us and perceive, to our amazement, that the path no longer lies before us, but behind; that the mountains are no longer distant, but beneath our very feet, and far below us we shall see that road, which at times has seemed so hard to travel.

Will that then be for us the end? Indeed it will be but the beginning. The student may have become a disciple, but the disciple is not yet a master. Having, in a great measure, conquered

himself, he has still to learn how to control and use those great powers which are now at his disposal, and, ere long, he will find that the most arduous part of his long ascent has still to be faced, the part whereon the smallest slip would instantly prove fatal. Even in the instant of looking around us, we shall see that what we took to be a mountain top is in reality only an outlying spur of that vast range which towers high beyond the clouds, and we shall realize how true it is, that "wherever we stand there are always higher peaks of effort still towering beyond," as one who has travelled that path has sent us back word.

May no one of us fail or falter by the way!

E. B.

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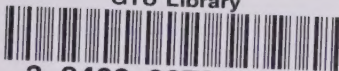
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